

## [Pioneer Days of A. H. Bratferg]

14

### Pioneer Days of A. H. Bratferg

A. H. Bratferg was born September 1, 1856 in Ringsager, Norway. With his father, Hans, and his mother, Angoth, a brother, Edward, and a sister, Lena, they sailed for America in the year of 1860. No quick sea voyages were in store for these travelers. Instead of the usual few days that it takes in our day, the Bratferg family spent seven weary weeks in a sailboat on the voyage from their Norway home to America, the land of golden opportunities.

Upon landing in New York they boarded a freight train and came to La Crosse, Wisconsin. This town was but a mere lumbering camp and had no depot. The family was dumped off the train, bag and baggage at a point near the present Mill Street crossing, where they awaited the arrival of John Kjos who was to meet them and conduct them to their future home. Mr. Kjos lived on the farm now owned by B. M. Lee, north of Holmen. The farm buildings at that time were situated on the banks of the Long Coulee creek about a half mile east of the location of the present buildings.

Here the Bratferg family resided for two years, when they purchased sixty acres of land from Swen Hanson who owned the present Adolph Holter farm.

2

They could not afford to build a house of their own so lived in a log hut owned by Mr. Hanson. After a few years of prosperity, they built a house of their own in which Andrew Bratferg grew to manhood.

When Mr. Bratferg was but sixteen years of age he worked for his brother-in-law, Hans Epperdahl in Trempeleau County. Here he had to handle a three yoke team of oxen from early dawn until dark in breaking new land for a farm. Grass was so tall and plentiful that at night, the oxen were unhitched and left to pick their own feed. Before dawn Mr. Bratferg would have to be up and hunting for the oxen for the days work. Wading in damp wet grass above his knees or waist was not an unusual experience, and although his clothes may have been drenched by the damp grass the days labor went on without a change to dry clothing.

The first great sorrow came to this family in the year 1882, when the brave father, Hans, was called by death. The following year, on November 7, 1883, Andrew Bratferg decided to make a home for himself by wedding Amelia Sandman. His mother being alone on the farm, Mr. Bratferg and his young bride lived with her. During the three years of residence in this log house, two daughters, now Mrs. B. N. Lee and Mrs. L. A. Lee, were born.

### 3

Visits and trips were not very frequent in these busy pioneer days. Mr. Bratferg tells of times when they went to visit his sister Lena, who lived at Elk Creek, a few miles north of Whitehall. Today the trip is easily made in an hour and a half. In those days, they could never be certain just how long they would have to be gone from home. As there was no bridge across Black River, a ferry was used. The other small streams and creeks were forded by the horses, sometimes quite easily and then again with great difficulty. Often times the river was so full of logs that travelers would have to remain until the following day at the Crosby farm before they could cross the river to get home. Occasionally it would have to be a longer wait and in such a case, Mr. Bratferg would travel on the other side of Black River to North Bend, cross the bridge there and then come to Long Coulee. Often times the water would be so high in the marshes that it would run into the buggy and it certainly was difficult for the horses. There were no roads but just plain wagon trails to follow.

## Library of Congress

In the year of 1886 Mr. Bratferg moved his family to the town of Barre where he rented the custom mill. During their residence in Barre, a third daughter, Elvah, was born. He 4 operated the mill for three years but had to discontinue this work, due to a severe case of catarrh. Because of this affliction, he could not stand the dust caused by flour and feed so he decided to remove his family to Long Coulee, where he purchased the farm now owned by his son Ansel. This farm was purchased from Andrew Olson Bye.

The following year, 1890, a second sorrow entered the Bratferg home, when Mr. Bratferg's mother was called by death. We might say that 1890 was a doubly sorrowful year because they lost their only son, who was only sixteen months old.

Whenever cattle were to be sold from the farm, they had to be driven from Long Coulee to La Crosse, and many were the times when he would leave home early in the morning with cattle, returning home late at night, very tired, after having walked the entire distance both ways.

There was no settlement in Holmen - not even a bridge across the creek. Oxen had to ford the creek and there was a plank or two for people to walk on the first building toward the settling of Holmen was a blacksmith shop situated on the present site of A. O. Iostad and Co.

Two sons, Ansel and Orville were born in 1892 and 5 and 1895 respectively.

In consulting Mr. Bratferg about the value he has been to his community, I could not gain much satisfaction, but through other sources, I have learned that he has been very influential in many capacities. He served the town of Holland as chairman from 1899 to 1904. During this time he assisted the county board in assessing the valuation of various farms throughout La Crosse County. He also assisted a great deal in the upbuilding of the Long Coulee cemetery.

## Library of Congress

In July, 1916, Mr. Bratferg's only brother, Edwin, who was a retired school teacher, passed away. This same fall Mr. Bratferg's oldest son, Ansel was married and with his brother Orville, rented the farm. Mr. and Mrs. Bratferg then moved to La Crosse, where they spent the winter. Often having spent so many years in Long Coulee, La Crosse did not seem like home to the couple, so in the following March they purchased a lot from their son-in-law, L. T. Lee, and erected their present home.

In 1919, their youngest son Orville was married and bought the farm from his father which Mr. Bratferg had purchased from Mrs. Bratferg's brother, Rofert Landman, in 1906.

6

Mr. Bratferg has five children living, and twenty grand children. One grandson passed away in 1924. There is also one great grandson.

Although 74 years of age, and having spent his entire life at hard work, Mr. Bratferg is still very active and ambitious and very much interested in present day affairs.

When this account of his past is put on exhibition at the historical meeting of the Homemakers on November 7, Mr. and Mrs. Bratferg will be celebrating their forty-seventh wedding anniversary and we will all wish them many more years of happiness and health as a reward for their efforts put forth in days when the present conveniences were unknown.

Sylvan Lee

1

[14?]

Pioneer Days of A. H. Bratferg

A. H. Bratferg was born September 1, 1856 in Ringsager, Norway. With his father, Hans, and his mother, Angoth, a brother, Edward, and a sister, Lena, they sailed for America in

## Library of Congress

the year of 1860. No quick sea voyages were in store for these travelers. Instead of the usual few days that it takes in our day, the Bratferg family spent seven weary weeks in a sail - boat taking them on the voyage from their Norway home to America, the land of golden opportunities. Upon landing in New York, they bordered boarded a freight train and came to La Crosse, Wisconsin. This town was but a mere lumbering camp and had no depot. The family was dumped off the train, bag [?] and baggage at a point near the present Mill Street crossing, where they awaited the arrival of John Kjos who was to meet them and 2 conduct them to their future home. Mr. Kjos lived on the farm now owned by B. M. Lee, north of Holmen. The farm buildings at that time were situated on the banks of the Long Coulee creek about a half mile east of the location of the present buildings.

Here the Bratferg family resided for two years, when they purchased sixty acres of land from Swen Hanson who owned the present Adolph Holter farm. They could not afford to build a house of their own so lived in a log hut owned by Mr. Hanson. After a few years of prosperity, they built a house of their own in which Andrew Bratferg grew to manhood.

When Mr. Bratferg was but sixteen years of age he worked for his brother-in-law, Hans Epperdahl in Trempeleau County. Here he had to handle a three yoke team of oxen from early dawn 3 until dark in breaking new land for a farm. Grass was so tall and plentiful that at night, [?] the oxen were unhitched and left to pick their own feed. Before dawn Mr. Bratferg would have to be up and hunting for the oxen for the days work. Wading in damp [?] wet grass above his knees or [waist?] [nas?] was not an unusual experience, and although his clothes may have been drenched by the damp grass, the days labor went on without a change for to dry clothing. The first great sorrow came to this family in the year of 1882, when the brave father, Hans, was called by Death. The following year, on November 7, 1883, Andrew Bratferg decided to make a home for himself by wedding Amelia Sandman. His mother being alone on the farm, Mr. Bratferg and his young bride lived here with her. During the three years of residence in this log house, two 4 daughters, now Mrs. B. N. Lee and Mrs. L. A. Lee, were born.

## Library of Congress

Visits and trips were not very frequent in these busy pioneer days. Mr. Bratferg tells of times when they went to visit his sister Lena, who lived at Elk Creek, a few miles north of Whitehall. Today the trip is easily made in a [an?] hour and a half. In those days, they could never be certain just how long they would have to be gone from home. As there was no bridge across Black River, a ferry was used. [all?] The other small streams and creeks were forded by the horses, sometimes quite easily and then again with great difficulty. Often times the river was so full of logs that travelers would have to remain until the following day at the Crosby farm before they could cross the river to get home. Occasionally it would have to be a longer wait and in such a case, Mr. Bratferg would travel 5 on the other side [Templever?] County side, of Black River to North Bend, cross the bridge there and then come to Long Coulee Coulee. Often times the water would be so high in the marshes that it would run into the buggy and it certainly was difficult for the horses. There were no roads but just plain buggy wagon trails to follow.

In the year of 1886 Mr. Bratferg moved his family to the town of Barre where he found rented the custom mill. During their residence in Barre, a third daughter, Elvah, was born. He operated the mill for three years but had to discontinue this work, due to a severe case of catarrh. Because of this affliction, he could not stand the dust caused by flour & feed so he decided to remove his family to Long Coulee, where he purchased the farm, now owned by his son Ansel. This farm was purchased from Andrew Olson Bye.

The following year, 1890, a second 6 sorrow entered the Bratferg home, when Mr. Bratferg's mother was called by death. We might say that 1890 was a doubly sorrowful year because they lost their only son, who was only sixteen months old.

Whenever cattle were to be sold from the farm, they had to be driven from Long Coulee to La Crosse, and many were the times when he would leave home early in the morning with cattle, returning home late at night, very tired, after having walked the entire distance both ways.

## Library of Congress

There was no settlement in Holmen - not even a bridge across the creek. Oxen had to ford the creek and there was a plank or two for people to walk on. The first building toward the settling of Holmen was a blacksmith shop situated on the present site of A. O. Iostad and Co.

Two sons, Ansel and Orville were born in 1892 and 1895 respectively.

In consulting Mr. Bratferg about the value he was and has been 7 to his community, I could not gain much satisfaction, but through other sources, I have learned that he has been very influential in many capacities. He served the town of Holland as chairman from 1899 to 1904. During this time he assisted the county board in assessing the valuation of various farms throughout La Crosse County. He also assisted a great deal in the upbuilding of the Long Coulee cemetery.

In July, 1916, Mr. Bratferg's only brother, Edwin, who was a retired school teacher, passed away. This same fall Mr. Bratferg's oldest son, Ansel was married and with his brother Orville, rented the farm. Mr. and Mrs. Bratferg then moved to La Crosse, where they spent the winter. Often having spent so many years in Long Coulee, La Crosse did not seem like home to the couple, so in the following March they purchased a lot from their son - in - law, L. T. Lee, 8 and erected their present home.

In 1919, their youngest son Orville was married and bought the farm from his father which Mr. Bratferg had purchased from Mrs. Bratferg's brother, Robert Landman, in 1906.

Mr. Bratferg has five children living, and twenty grand children. One grandson passed away in 1924. There is also one great grand - son.

Although 74 years of age, and having spent his entire life at hard work, Mr. Bratferg is still very active and ambitious and very much interested in present day affairs.

## Library of Congress

When this account of his past is put on exhibition at the historical meeting of the Homemakers on November 7, Mr. and Mrs. Bratferg will be celebrating their forty-seventh wedding anniversary and we will all wish them many more years of happiness and health as a reward for their efforts put forth in days when the present conveniences were unknown.

Sylvan Lee